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In The Morning
and other poems



FREDERICK BRATNERO MITCHELL



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In The Morning

and other poems



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FREDERICK BRAINERD MITCHELL

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Preface

This is the part of me
Born of the art of me
Out of the heart of me.

Heed not the rest of me!
This is the best of me;
Take it, as test of me.

New Britain, Conn., Dec., 1913

Proem

"I have builded for myself a monument more enduring than brass."—Horace.

I do not ask to write my humble name
In brass or granite, to endure for aye;
A simple rhymers of this latter day,
I cannot hope to grasp the hand of Fame,
Or look to win the flattering acclaim
That to her temple oft has paved the way;
Like other rhymers, I must say my say
And reach my goal appointed; but my aim
Is this: In years to come my little child—
Who may have gifts that fate to me denies,
Who lisps in rhyme of flowers running wild,
And sees, in pansy blossoms, babies' eyes—
May find, in these rude lines by me compiled,
The fount from which his genius took its rise.

In The Morning

Through mists of vanished years I see
An evening bathed in sunset's glory;
My little daughter, on my knee,
With kisses clamors for a story.
But, all too soon, with footstep light
The Sand Man comes, despite her scorning,
And, half asleep, she lisps, "Good Night!
I hope I'll see you in the morning".

One night, in strange and sombre guise
The Sand Man came,—and left us weeping.
'Neath Summer sun and Winter skies
Our little child has long been sleeping.
But still, in dreams, we see a light—
Not all of earth—her head adorning,
And hear again her soft "Good Night!
I hope I'll see you in the morning".

O quaint, child-words of love and cheer!
Our balm in grief, our joy in sorrow;
Though Life's long night is drawing near
In this sweet hope we wait the morrow.
We shall not fear, when fades the light,
Though darkness come with little warning,
For grief will vanish with the night
And we shall see her—"In the morning".

Books of Childhood

New Britain High School, 1877.

The scholar sat in his easy chair,
Scratching his head with a puzzled air;
Waiting for thoughts that would not come,
Feeling, and looking, decidedly glum.

At last, with a sigh he drops his head;
His heart is heavy, his eyelids red;
He seems to hear his teacher say
"To-morrow is composition day!"

Last night no rest had relieved his toil,
And now he is burning the midnight oil;
He closes his eyes, the lamp still gleams;
His head falls lower, and now he dreams!

He hears the patter of tiny feet
That move to the sound of music sweet;
And seems to see, as he stands aghast,
The Books of his childhood tripping past.

"Mother Goose," in a cover red,
Marches along at the very head;
"Jack and the Bean-stalk" next is seen,
Clad in a suit of faded green.

Following them, a mighty throng
Of Books, with titles short and long;
Books for little women and men
Between the ages of five and ten.

Then the music stops;—but begins again
With a wild and fitful minor strain,
And the air is tinged with a sulphurous light
As certain Novels salute his sight.

And lo! as he looks with wondering eyes,
Each Novel seems to increase in size,
Growing and swelling more and more
Until as broad and high as a door.

His heart grows cold with a sudden dread
As he sees the crown of a tufted head,
And an arm uplifted, dark and nude,
From every cover and leaf protrude.

Before he can shriek, or utter a word,
A loud and terrible WHOOP is heard.
A thousand Indians, painted red,
Rush upon him and strike him dead!

Alas for the youth! His wearied brain
Proved unable to stand the strain;
Reason tottered, gave way and fell,
And he died, at last, in a maniac's cell.

The Tutor

Amherst College, 1879

Once, upon a midnight chilling, as I pored, with brain unwilling,
Over many a proposition I had never seen before—,
As I "Boned" with application, longing for emancipation
From the hard examination in Geometry at four—,
Suddenly there came a knocking, knocking at my study door;
Only this, and nothing more.

Ah, distinctly I remember! 'twas the middle of December,
There was not a single ember in the fire-place on the floor;
Vainly I had tried to borrow of my neighbors till the morrow,
And my heart was full of sorrow, while I thought, with spirit sore,
Of a rare and radiant Tutor, whom the students call—no more!
Nameless here, forevermore!

I was just prepared to hustle any student, when a rustle
Like the paper in the bustle of a maid of thirty-four,
And the sound of stealthy creeping, at an hour when all were sleeping,
Set my heart with terror leaping, till I sweat from every pore.
" 'Tis the Sophomores!" I muttered, "But they'll have to bust the door
E'er they enter!" Nothing more.

Presently there came a feeling as of shame upon me stealing,
For such nervous agitation I had never felt before;
So that now, with voice revealing the emotion I was feeling,
I exclaimed, as if concealing, "Sir, your pardon I implore!
But the truth is, I was sleeping." Here I opened wide the door;
Darkness there, and nothing more!

Deep into that darkness gazing, though in mortal dread of hazing,
With a courage that no Freshman ever dared to show before,
Who it was I stood surmising, when, from out the gloom arising,
Came the whispered words surprising, "I am not a Sophomore!"
Also came a smell of brimstone, as I should have said before;
Only this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, while I wondered what was burning,
Soon there came a smell of brimstone somewhat stronger than before;
Then, with quite an inward panic, I beheld the form Titanic
Of His Majesty Satanic, as he entered at the door;
And I saw the fiery trailing of his tail along the floor:—
Only this, and nothing more.

Down upon the sofa sinking, too much terrified for thinking,
I beheld the hairy monster take a seat upon the floor;
And, the room becoming dimmer, as the lights began to glimmer,
Growing grim, and growing grimmer, sat the monster on the floor,—
Sat enveloped in a fiery cloud of sulphur on the floor,—
This he did, and nothing more.

Presently I heard a groaning like the sound of spirits moaning,
And I noticed that his tears were falling fast upon the floor;
Then, from off the sofa leaping, I exclaimed, with terror creeping,
“Why, the Devil, art thou weeping? Tell me, tell me, I implore!
Will the cloud be never lifted from that heart with sorrow sore?”
Quoth the Demon, “Nevermore!”

Then I said to him, “What! Never?” and he answered, “Hardly ever!”
And I wondered where in Hades he had heard of Pinafore.
Smiling then, as in derision, “I’ll extend,” said he, “Your vision
To the fields—no, not Elysian,—and to realms unknown before.”
And his story of that country where an ulster is a bore
I’ll forget—Ah, nevermore!

“I’ll begin,” said he, “By stating fire and brimstone unabating
Were the instruments of torture down below in days of yore;
Many a night, ’till morn returning, have I watched the demons burning
On a spit forever turning, and rejoiced to hear them roar;
But the wild and happy moments when I laughed to hear them roar
Will return—Ah, nevermore!”

For the age is now advancing, with the march, or rather prancing
Of the steed that men call Science into realms unknown before:
And, in short, one day, on learning there were fiends for Knowledge yearning,
Knowing this was worse than burning,—I had tried the thing before—
I presented them geometries, and ordered them to pore
O’er their pages evermore.”

"They supposed that pain was banished, but a week had scarcely vanished
When they howled for fire and brimstone and the tortures used before:
But I heeded not their groaning, night and day I kept them 'Boning',
And it added to their moaning, that, in spite of labor sore,
They forgot with every morning what they learned the day before,
And recalled it, nevermore."

"But my duties grew so wearing, mind and body both impairing,
That I tried to find a Tutor who would grind the demons sore;
I have found, throughout the nation, many a man of information,
But none fitted for the station;—tender-hearted all, at core—
So I've got to go to teaching, as I taught so long before;
And must teach, forevermore."

Up I sprang with mind undaunted, "I have found the man that's wanted!
'Tis a Tutor here at college, he who makes my life a bore
With his cruel smile sardonic, with his speeches so ironic,
With his "Theory Harmonic," and his problems by the score!
Take this Tutor and his extra propositions, I implore,
To thy home, forevermore!"

Then his face became distorted with a smile, as I exhorted,
And he stood upon his horny head and danced upon the floor;
"Let him keep," said he, "His station till the summer's long vacation,
If he meet my approbation, it shall be as you implore—
He shall go to teach the demons on the dark Plutonian shore,
And be heard of, nevermore!"

.

And the Tutor, unremitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the gay and festive Freshmen as he sat in days of yore;
Still he grindeth persevering, but the time is ever nearing—
It will come with the appearing of the class of '84;—
When the Freshmen, from the shadow of this geometric bore,
Shall be freed, forevermore!

Fireside Reveries

Without, the drifting sleet blows here and there
And stings the cold cheek of the window pane;
Within, its noisiest efforts are in vain,
For, stretched at length within my easy chair,
I sit and muse, and watch the ruddy glare
That laughs defiance to the storm and rain;
And dream of days that come not back again,
And vanished faces; till it seems the air
Is thick with memories that have taken form,
And, ghost-like, hover in the flickering light
Mocking my sad heart, as the bitter storm
Mocks the poor traveller with visions bright
Of light, and home, and friends, and fireside warm,
While round him, ever deeper, draws the night.

Only A Matter Of Time

(Topical Song.)

Everything comes to the man who can wait;
 It's only a matter of Time;
We get our deserts, be it sooner or late;
 It's only a matter of Time.
If Fortune eludes you, don't whimper and sigh!
You can win her at last, and you will, if you try;
And the world will be yours!—"In the sweet bye and bye",
 It's only a matter of Time.

The callowest stripling will soon be a man,
 It's only a matter of Time;
And probably marry, as soon as he can;
 It's only a matter of Time.
He thinks, when he's entered the married estate
And can't pay his bills, that his troubles are great;
But they prove to be Little Ones, sooner or late,
 It's only a matter of Time.

The ladies, dear ladies, are going to vote,
 It's only a matter of Time;
But the new style of dress will be "Getting their goat",
 It's only a matter of Time.
They wear hobble skirts to a party or dance;
When they step in a street car we try not to glance;
If they get any tighter they'll have to wear Pants;
 It's only a matter of Time.

Jack Johnson's defeat you will see on the screen;
 It's only a matter of Time;
Some "White Hope" will hit him a "Biff on the Bean";
 It's only a matter of Time.
His manager says, with an accent of scorn,
"The man who can lick him has yet to be born"!
But, unless he quits fighting "Old John Barleycorn",
 It's only a matter of Time.

Our Tastes often change with the passing of years;
 It's only a matter of Time;
And we come to admire what excited our fears;
 It's only a matter of Time.
The average school girl will stand in a chair
At the sight of a mouse, and will "Holler for fair";
But, before very long, she puts "Rats" in her hair;
 It's only a matter of Time.

Yes, everything here, if we view it aright,
 Is only a matter of Time;
Our Day is soon over, and then comes the Night;
 It's only a matter of Time.
And from Time's limitations we never are free
Though we sleep by the shore of Eternity's sea;
For Eternity's self, as it seemeth to me,
 Is only a matter of Time.

Charles Elliott Mitchell

"The Gentle Fisher."

In youth he loved to wander where the deep
Trout haunted pools would tempt the angler's skill;
At noon of life, by brook or purling rill
His slower step the well-known path would keep;
And when the shadows fell adown Life's steep
He loved the cowslip-bordered streams, and still
He heard their call and answered it, until
Life's day was over,—and he fell asleep.

I love to think of him—nor do I deem
It sacrilege—in paths like those he trod
On earth;—by vine-clad brooks whose ripples gleam,
Luring the wary trout with fly and rod;
Pacing the banks of that celestial stream
"Whose flow supplies the city of our God."

Ralph G. Hibbard*

Next to the gifted few who seem to share
With the Almighty his creative power—
Whose garnered thought, mankind's all priceless dower,
The hand of Time is powerless to impair,—
I hold the man whose genius, scarce less rare,
Interprets their great thoughts, and for the hour
Instructs, delights, transports us by his power,
And makes this dull world seem indeed more fair.

Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet and King Lear,
Falstaff and Prince are present at thy call;
Nor less the art that draws a smile or tear
From humbler sources: Better than them all
I love, in hours of weariness, to hear
Sam Lawson, with his mellow nasal drawl.

**For more than forty years Professor of Elocution at Wesleyan University.*

Our Janitor

Thompsonville, Conn., High School, 1883.

Who is the man of stature small
That builds the fire and sweeps the hall,
And smiling answers one and all?
Our Janitor!

And who, with zeal that never tires,
On days when mercury aspires
Builds up such Purgatorial fires?
Our Janitor!

And when the air is cold without,
And scholars, shivering, stand about,
Who is it lets the fire go out?
Our Janitor!

Who wields the broom and makes no sound
In rooms where chestnut shucks abound,
By careless scholars scattered round?
Our Janitor!

Who sifts the coal with frugal hand,
And clears the walk of leaves and sand,
And always heeds your least command?
Our Janitor!

Who is the man to whom was given
"One Talent," by the will of Heaven,
But, to improve that one has striven?
Our Janitor!

When, round the judgment seat on high,
"What man was faithful?" is the cry,
Some voice, I'm sure, will make reply,
"Our Janitor!"

The Silent Poets

Alas for the silent poets
Who struggle to find a tongue
For the music that swells within them,
But lack the gift of song!
Their lot is the hardest, surely,
Of any upon this earth;
They suffer the pangs of labor
Without the power of birth.

Lines For A Young Girl's Album

Father Time, with his hour glass, stands
And sprinkles snow in the darkest hair;
Beneath the touch of his shadowy hands
Faces wrinkle that once were fair.
But the face that mirrors a kindly heart,—
A heart that to one and all is friend,—
Will brighten ever, as years depart,
And grow more beautiful to the end.

Impromptus

Her Bonnet

Why should I praise in rhyme
My sweetheart's bonnet?
Does such a slender theme
Deserve a sonnet?
Although with ribbons rare
She deftly wreathes it,
It's chiefest charm will be
The face beneath it.

Her Picture

But when I saw her face,
By artist painted,
I think it no disgrace
To say I fainted.
For you'll agree with me
That, though I love it,
It's chiefest charm will be
The hat above it.

The Retort Courteous

"My dear," said she, "It's plain to see
You're not amenable to reason!"
"Perhaps," said I, in quick reply,
"But I'm a-man-able to reason!"

“What John P. Robinson Thinks”

(With apologies to “Hosea Bigelow.”)

President Taft is a sensible man,
Strong, cool headed, and far from flighty;
He's always doing the best he can,
And his best is good!—But he's not Almighty.

So John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Taft has fought with the Powers of Greed,
A long, hard fight, and he's bound to win it!
But the Robber Trusts aren't easily “Treed”,
And “Rome wasn't built in a day”,—or minute.

So John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Taft appointed a Tariff Board—
Skilled, non-partisan, well-trained thinkers;—
But he stands “Four Square” against the horde
Of irresponsible “Tariff Tinkers”.

Yet John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Wilson nails “Free Trade” to the mast,
Like an old-time Pirate with gun and sabre;
So every vote for Wilson cast
Is a vote to lower the price of labor!

But John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Wilson's a man of words, not deeds;
Scholarly man, of good intention;
But he knows no more of his Country's needs
Than a June-Bug knows of the Fourth Dimension.

Yet John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Theodore Roosevelt's out to grab,
"By hook or by crook", the next election;
If he's progressive, he's like the Crab,
His progress lies in the wrong direction.

But John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Roosevelt says HIS view's correct,
None may criticise, none disparage;
But for OTHERS views he has less respect.
Than a Tom-Cat has for the rites of marriage.

Yet John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

Taft has driven his balky team
Of House and Senate, and kept them under;
With skill and courage and nerve supreme
He got things done!—and with scarce a blunder.

But John P.

Robinson, He

Says he won't vote for President T.

O Little Critics of Nameless Name!
Sleek, self-satisfied, would-be teachers!
It's easy enough to play the game
From a cosy seat on the sun-kissed bleachers!

But John P.

Robinson, He

Says: "That hits others, but don't hit me."

Taft has Honesty, Patience, Strength,
Tact, and Courage that few suspected;
Qualities sure to win at length,
And, next November, he'll be elected! *

And John P.

Robinson, He

Will vote for him, too, if he votes with me.

**Poets are seldom great Prophets.—Which may account for
the fact that there is no great profit in poetry. F. B. M.*

The Minor Poets

When, at the call of newly wakened Spring,
The lark soars heavenward and outpours the fire
Of her glad greeting, all the feathered choir
Of lesser songsters join her welcoming.

Even so, upborne on Inspiration's wing,
Great souls pour forth their passion or desire;
But shall we, therefore, sit with muted lyre?
May none but golden-voiced Caruso sing?

Not every soul is flooded with the light,
Nor every voice melodious and strong;
But haply some may hear and find delight
In simple numbers:—So we fare along,
Content to view, from some far Pisgah's height,
The fair, forbidden Promised Land of Song.

My Brother's Keeper

Not mine the fault that in his veins there flowed
Conflicting currents, as of good and ill;
Unstable ever, though he lacked not will,
He could, or would not keep the narrow road;
And when at last, beneath the heavy load
Of years and talents wasted, weak and ill
He sank disheartened, was it mine to fill
His empty cup that should have overflowed?

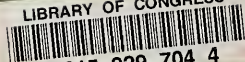
And yet,—I knew his need; Grim visaged Care
Oft shared his sleepless pillow till the dawn.
With word or deed I might have helped him bear
The petty ills that hold the soul in pawn;
But lo! "While I was busy here and there,
The Man was gone!" Dear God!—The Man was gone!

My Creed

As one in darkness, groping toward the light,
Might guide his footsteps by a fragile reed,
We lean, perforce, upon some man-made creed
And walk by Faith in paths unknown to Sight.
But when, like children crying in the night,
We seek assurance in some hour of need,
Behold the Sacred Page! whereon we read
"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Is, then, the Power that gave to seas their shore
And bound the stars in Gravitation's sheaf
The same that bade the woman "Sin no more!"
And brought redemption to the dying thief?
I know not; but I cry, with one of yore,
"Lord, I believe!—Help thou mine unbelief."

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